



Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 23, 2004
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CRM
(202) 514-2008
TDD (202) 514-1888

HAWAII RESIDENT PLEADS GUILTY IN CAMBODIAN ADOPTION CONSPIRACY

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Assistant Attorney General Christopher A. Wray of the Criminal Division, U.S. Attorney John McKay of the Western District of Washington, U.S. Attorney Edward Kubo, Jr., of the District of Hawaii and Michael J. Garcia, Homeland Security Assistant Secretary for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, announced today that Lauryn Galindo, 53, has pleaded guilty to charges in a criminal information of conspiracy to commit visa fraud, conspiracy to launder money and the structuring of financial transactions.

The charges stem from a two-year investigation into the adoption of Cambodian children by American families, in which material misrepresentations as to the orphan status and identities of the infants were made by Galindo to the now-defunct Immigration and Naturalization Service, whose investigative functions are now carried out by the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The misrepresentations were made from January 1997 through December 2001 in order to obtain visas for the infants to travel with their adopting parents to the United States.

The guilty pleas, to a two-count criminal information filed in Seattle and to count three of a three-count indictment originating from the District of Hawaii, were entered today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Mary Alice Theiler in Seattle.

On December 10, 2003, Lynn Devin, the sister of Lauryn Galindo, entered a guilty plea to related charges. Both Galindo and Devin committed the offenses using Seattle International Adoptions (SIA), a Seattle-based company. Galindo and Devin have agreed that all illegal profits made by them through SIA, including cash and real property, will be forfeited. With Galindo's guilty plea, the case with respect to American citizens involved in the conspiracy has been effectively resolved. The government plans to take no action which would jeopardize the residency status of Cambodian children in the United States who were adopted through SIA.

The charges of conspiracy to commit money laundering and structuring financial transactions each carry a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. The charge of conspiracy to commit money laundering carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$500,000. Galindo is scheduled to be sentenced on September 24, 2004 at 1:30 in front of U.S. District Court Judge Thomas Zilly.

The case was jointly prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jim Lord of the Western District of Washington and Trial Attorney Michael Barr of the Domestic Security Section of the Department of Justice. Michael Seabright, Assistant United States Attorney for the District of Hawaii, assisted in the prosecution. The case was investigated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Internal Revenue Service.

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